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ABSTRACT

Chapter 1 discusses what children learn through play and how they learn it. Chapter 2 contrasts different goals of public schools and early childhood programs. Chapter 3 describes science activities for young children. Chapter 4 outlines additional learning activities. A bibliography lists suggested readings on play. (RH)

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100 NEW PLAY IDEAS FOR MONDAY MORNING

by

Anne Cairns Federlein, Ph.D.

A Publication of
Child Development Designs Inc.
West Bloomfield, Michigan

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PREFACE

The world is changing so quickly, it is impossible to keep up. However, if you think how your life has been changed by technology in less than ten years, there is a new understanding of how changes creep into our lives, quietly and without fanfare.

For example, how many of us had microwave ovens, electric garage door openers, home computers with printers and modems and cars that talk to us ten years ago? Many of us don't have all of them today, yet they are accepted as everyday items.

What kind of lives will our children have, as they eagerly rush into the work force in the next century? What skills will they need to maintain a job that is well paying and ensures a high quality of life for them?

In a recent report by the Office of Technology Assessment, it is predicted only those adults with a college education will be employed on a regular basis. In addition to a degree, workers will be rewarded for being creative and discovering new uses for new technological changes. They must also be flexible because there will be a constant pressure from working in an ever changing environment.

The report envisions "a system where a well-educated elite enjoys a majority of the benefits, while the costs of flexibility are paid by workers forced to take temporary jobs with narrowly defined tasks monitored by electronic surveillance."

Children who are allowed to play today are reaping incidental benefits, such as problem solving and decision making skills and creative thinking. But the flexibility allowed in a play based curriculum might be the greatest gift we can give children to survive in the twenty first century. As technology changes our lives at break neck speed, we will constantly be living with change. Flexibility allows one to change direction and take advantage of the opportunities during the chaos of change.

A play based curriculum today in your classroom gives the children survival skills for their adult years. Remember, these children will be in charge of our lives in the next century. What kind of world would you like it to be? One where adults are rigid, follow directions and cling to "old fashioned" ideas that no longer work in a new age? Or, would you rather live your old age in a

society where adults think for themselves, nurture others and can adapt quickly to new ideas that make a difference in our quality of life?

Look into your children's eyes. What do you see? You have children at their most impressionable age...make the most of it. You hold tomorrow on your lap.

Implementing and defending a play based curriculum in early childhood programs is difficult as many parents and administrators support criterion based teaching and testing for academic learning.

And yet my energies have been directed toward that goal for twenty years in public and private sectors. As I again go through the controversy of academic v. play based learning or workbooks v. paint, clay, water and sand, I look to my graduate students to carry the spirit of play into their classrooms.

Early childhood teachers must be recognized for they are the troops on the front, striving to institute a child based curriculum and develop the seeds for lifetime learning. Their zeal is tremendous and they are unyielding in seeking concrete answers in a world with few givens. These teachers are doing the research that will never be written in professional journals or give them media fame.

Yet, they are the inspiration for this short book and I thank them for their energy and dedication.

I also thank Clem Cleveland, in Washington, D. C. He is not only the consultant for all the publications from Child Development Designs, he is my teacher.

Anne Cairns Federlein
June, 1988

'Play is children's way of perceiving the world they have been called upon to change.'

Maxim Gorki
1868 - 1936

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chapter one

'Love childhood, cherish its play, its delights, its wonderful naturalness.'
Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH PLAY

All children learn through play. They learn by talking and messing around. They learn through their five senses.

Play must be valued by adults in charge. They are bound to allow the child time and space to experiment, explore and manipulate the materials. There is a delicate balance in the curriculum. Children need stimulation and new materials to investigate. However, the materials cannot be changed before the child has explored all the possibilities of the new items.

Change Learning Centers Often

A learning center that is the same month after month is overlooked by children. Sometimes if a popular center is changed weekly, it limits the learning in the classroom. Teachers must observe the children. When interest wanes, add new items to the center and move it to another area in the room. Children let us know when it is time to remove the center completely.

What Is Learned through Play?

Children learn many life skills while they play. Some of them are:

* Decision making skills
* Problem solving skills
* Creative thinking
* Learning comparisons
* Learning discriminations
* Making predictions
* Cause and effect
* Feelings and reactions
* Different roles
* Properties and qualities
* Construction and function
* Transformations
* Coordination of information
* Satisfaction of invention
* Anticipation of change
* Knowledge of academic skills

Play contributes to every area of the child's development: cognitive, emotional, social, language and physical. Most of all play makes learning fun.

What Is the Teacher's Role?

The teacher is the pivot of a play based program. Rather than directing, the teacher guides activities in the classroom. Selection of materials is critical. They must be durable, safe, easy to handle and accessible to children. The equipment should be adapted to more than one use. Budgets are often short of funds. Therefore, equipment and materials should be of high quality to keep replacement costs low.

The role of the teacher is to facilitate each child's development. The child is led to learning. The curriculum is a catalyst, similar to a velvet hammer. That is, the child has certain choices in the learning process and the curriculum provides the boundaries. This is different from upper elementary grades where the teacher primarily disseminates information.

The teacher who is effective in a play based environment:

* Understands child development
* Is able to put theory into practice
* Constructs a hands on, play based curriculum
* Organizes the play environment
* Is an active observer and listener
* Interacts verbally and non verbally
* Expands each child's learning
* Asks specific and general questions
* Evaluates self, child and environment
* Allows changes in self, child and environment
* Has parents regularly in the classroom
* Shares information with parents consistently

Administrator's Role

Administrators can make or break a play based program. It is important to teachers and parents they understand what is being learned in the classroom. Just saying they support the program is not enough. Administrators establish credibility for the program by defending the curriculum and teachers to parents and the community at large. If there is not a thorough understanding of the theory and practice of play based learning, the program is at risk. Parents and teachers can pressure administrators to "prove" children are learning. Often it is easier to support and defend academic programs with drill and practice lessons on specific skills. They are easy to test and "prove" the child has learned.

Administrators play a crucial role in a play based program. They must:

- **Learn what a child learns in a play based program**
- **Support teachers trained in play**
- **Be wary of quiet, neat classrooms**
- **Do not reward teachers with quiet, neat classes**
- **Understand children learn through talking, moving around and messing with materials**
- **Provide in service training on play based learning for all staff on a regular basis**
- **Attend all in services on play and show support**
- **Network with other administrators and invite them to attend in services**

Different Kinds of Play

Play is not play. As with most things in life, play is complicated. There is no one definition. That is why parents and teachers often are talking about play, but mean different things.

There are three categories of play in early childhood classrooms. Depending on how the play materials are presented, most activities in the curriculum can be placed in one of three categories:

Free Play- Theoretically, this is the highest category of play. Children are in control of their own learning. They learn through manipulation, exploration and experiencing the environment. There is almost no adult intervention. Students use the teacher as an additional resource and take as much time as they need to learn. The experimental English school, Summer Hill, was based on free play.

Guided Play- is what is used in most play based early childhood programs. The teacher guides the child's learning and takes responsibility for the curriculum. Children make decisions, problem solve and think creatively during designated activities. The time in the classroom limits the learning process. However, home activities and continuation of the lesson on a weekly or monthly basis relieves the time factor. The curriculum facilitates learning in all areas of the child's development.

Directed Play- is used in "academic" early childhood programs. It is not very playful. The teacher directs the child in learning certain facts and concepts. The curriculum is sequential, lists objectives for each lesson, ideas for implementation and evaluation materials. Many of the directed play curriculas are published by text book companies for public school use. The child has little or no

autonomy in his learning. Many of the activities include rote learning or drill and practice lessons.

Children need:

1-Time to explore, investigate and manipulate
2-Privacy for play
3-Enough space to play, mess, move and talk
4-Appropriate open ended materials
5-Adult interaction, not control

Suggestions for the Classroom

* Limit rules for play during free time
* Rotate a wide variety of materials regularly
* Have many props for make believe play
* Child must be controlling own behavior
* Adults listen and facilitate, not intrude
* Be an active listener, not participant
* Play should not have a payoff or reward

Remember, play does not have a product--rather it is the process of learning or all young children.

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chapter two

'Imagination is more important than knowledge.'

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS HAVE DIFFERENT GOALS

Teachers of young children are caught in a battle over curriculum. They are being asked daily to defend what they are doing in the classroom and to "prove" what the children have learned. Depending on the training and experiences of the teachers, answers to these questions vary.

Public school teachers are primarily trained to present a sequential, academic based curriculum. They have training about how children develop and learn. In direct opposition, early childhood teachers are trained to observe children and structure a curriculum to meet the needs of each child.

What Is Learned?

The first group "proves" what is being learned through published tests, dittos and workbooks, while the second uses informal testing and observation. Many elementary education principals are of no help. They have little, or no information in either area.

Tension is growing between the two groups of educators. Teachers are confused about expectations adminis-

trators and parents have of them. Public school teachers resist changing. They are not sure how to make the child the center of the curriculum. Early childhood trained educators, on the other hand, allow children to learn through play, rely on questionable assessments and resist using published materials, such as workbooks.

During the confusion between the two groups of teachers, "developmental" programs were instituted to ease the gap between academic and non academic classrooms.

Tension Between Groups

Early childhood educators in all 50 state departments of education have united to take a stand against academic programs for young children.

The chart on the next page shows the differences in the goals, curriculum, assessment and roles of children and teachers in the two kinds of programs. It is a useful tool to begin discussions with the two groups.

Playing Makes Us ...
Caring, Curious, Well Rounded Adults

Administrators and parents are challenging early childhood programs to allow children enough time in the daily schedule to play. They understand children are learning life skills, such as learning to take directions, following instructions, sharing and cooperating with others.

Children who experiment, explore and manipulate learn how to think scientifically. First they investigate the new play materials, then experiment with what it can do. They look for familiar clues and cues and then try new ideas. They hypothesize and test some more. If they are successful, they have learned new concepts.

Differences in Programs for Young Children

	Public School	Early Childhood
Goals	Learn specific tasks	Autonomy of child Develop all areas
Curriculum	Preacademic and Academic skills	Play based
Assessment	Published tests	Teacher observation
Child's role	Responds to curriculum Externally motivated	Acts on environment Internally motivated
Teacher's Role	Directs learning Assess/diagnose Prescribe tasks	Structure class to meet needs of child Encourage independence
Purpose of Education	Accelerate learning	Support development of whole child

If they fail to "make it work" there is even more learning because the child learns from mistakes and continues the "tests" until the material is understood. Problem solving, decision making and creative thinking skills are developed when the "experiment" fails. The knowledge gained from one's "mistakes" is always long remembered.

The basic rules of living with others are learned through play: how to get along with others and sharing; cleaning up messes and that everything has a place. Children learn to be fair at all times and help others. Taking care of animals and plants expose the children to life and death.

Singing and dancing makes everyone happy. Painting at the easel is the best! Building with blocks helps with math concepts and the wonders of architecture.

* It takes time to dream..to think..and to remember what they have learned.

* Curling up with a good book and friend develops a love for learning that lasts a lifetime. Sliding down the slide gives a feeling of accomplishment so does tying a shoe.

* Children learn how to be caring, curious and careful if they are given the gift of play time.

* Reading, spelling and math follow naturally when the child is ready. The basis of learning is not in the work book or ditto sheet--but through play.

* Learning to be caring, curious and careful are important today for children..and tomorrow when they are adults.

chapter three

'Play teaches children to master the world.'

Jean Piaget

SCIENCE ACTIVITIES ... TO USE ON MONDAY MORNING

The teacher's attitude is critical in a play based classroom. If it is not playful, children hesitate to explore, experience and manipulate materials in the classroom. If teachers direct the children, rather than facilitate or guide learning, children become robots. They wait to be told what to do, how and when to please the teacher. This undermines the intent of all early childhood education which is to allow children to become independent, make decisions and solve problems.

The following ideas for Monday morning are written for you. When you haven't a creative thought, your assistant is sick and there are four parents and three visitors in the classroom, open this book to any page and you are saved! These activities were tested in early childhood classrooms and modified to create exciting new learning experiences in all four areas of development--cognitive, language, social/emotional and physical.

Linda Bailey, a preschool science teacher, has included some of her never fail favorite lessons.

Berry Bubbly

Bubbles lend themselves to a great deal of geometric exploration and plain old fun! You can make this by mixing:

1 gallon of water
3/4 cup liquid soap (Joy or Dawn)
1/4 cup glycerine

A variety of wonderful household objects will yield amazing geometric clusters and designs of bubbles. Stunning examples are plastic berry baskets, plastic tops from six packs of soda, funnels, pipe cleaners bent into squares and triangles (two and three-D) and any other shape you can imagine.

Bubble solution can be spread on table tops. Children and drinking straws can create domes, bubble villages and much more by blowing air onto the table top.

Discover and invent your own bubble machines. Have fun!

Invite Your Ants to Lunch

Spring and summer are perfect for outdoor parties. Find out what foods are preferred at ant picnics!

Divide a paper plate into six or eight "pizza slices" with a magic marker.

On each slice place a different type of food: Peanut butter, honey, vegetables, bread, grass, sugar cubes, hard boiled egg and vinegar. Let your imagination be your guide.

Leave the Ant Pizza outside for at least an hour. You can experiment with different locations. Observe and record which foods seem to be preferred by your ants!

Magic Carpet

Create a sensory patterned path for little feet to walk on. Carpet samples, wood squares, linoleum, door mats, bricks, "astroturf" ... all induce different sensory experiences and lend themselves to a rich discussion of descriptive words: smooth, rough, hard, soft and many more. The concept of patterning can be taught through this sensory vehicle by building a pattern into your Magic Carpet.

Captured Rainbows

Fill a clear gallon jar with water and place where children can see it from all sides. Place a drop or two of each color of food coloring into the jar of water. Observe with the children the beautiful swirling, curling and diffusion of color.

In small plastic containers, prepare a variety of colored waters. Using eyedroppers, children can create their own Captured Rainbows in a large jar filled with clear water.

Rainbow Pies

Let children color round coffee filters with water soluble markers. Fold the colored filters into quarters and place in a cup of water tip down. Make sure one to two inches of the point is submerged in the water.

Let the filter absorb water for at least an hour. Open filter and let your rainbow dry. You can enjoy these pies just the way they are or extend the art activity. Rainbow Pie Flowers can be made by pinching the center of the filter and twisting on a pipe cleaner stem.

Rainbow Strips

Cut coffee filters into strips. Make a dot out of two or three colors of food coloring about one inch from one end of the strip. Place the strip in a small jar half filled with water. Watch the water soak up into the paper, traveling toward your color dot.

Observe what happens to the colors. They will be dissolved and carried up the filter strip. The lighter colors will be carried higher up the strip than the darker colors. This is an excellent exercise for developing observation and prediction skills.

Rainbows Everywhere

Put a fishbowl on the windowsill in direct sunlight. Put a large sheet of white paper on the floor in front of the window to catch the rainbows. Give children prisms and mirrors to go on a rainbow hunt and find the pot of gold.

Holy Tornado

In a tall clear plastic jar (or bottle) put one teaspoon of clear liquid soap. Make six small balls of aluminum foil. Foil should be folded and pressed so that it will sink. Fill the jar to the top with water and add two drops of food coloring.

Rotate the jar in a clockwise direction so that a swirling motion is produced within the container. Once the vortex is created, sit and enjoy your tornado. With a little practice, you will get the knack of creating this motion within the container. It's all in the wrist!

Dancing Raisins

Place 10 to 20 raisins in a clear glass filled with carbonated water and watch the fun! When enough bubbles (carbon dioxide) have attached themselves to each raisin to overcome the weight of each raisin, they will be "magically" raised to the surface. There the bubbles will pop and the raisin will sink again until enough bubbles attach themselves and the dance continues.

A Different Dance

In a tall glass of water, add four tablespoons of vinegar. Stir in three tablespoons of baking soda. Fun bubbles will begin to happen. Drop three to six small buttons in the bottom of the glass. Before long your buttons will be dancing.

You can also have a Pasta Dance Party by using small pieces of spaghetti noodles instead of buttons. Ole!

Magic Milk

Pour one to two inches of milk into a small bowl or pie pan. Gently add drops of a variety of food colorings. Pour a few drops of liquid detergent down the side of the bowl. For more fun, add detergent down the other side of the bowl. Watch beautiful colors marble and swirl in cosmic beauty.

Soda Fountain

In a tall plastic bottle filled with two cups of water, dissolve one tablespoon of baking soda and a few drops of liquid detergent. A little food coloring adds to the dramatic effect of this experiment. Then add three tablespoons of vinegar. The chemical reaction creates a foaming fountain of carbon dioxide gas. This is dramatic fun that can enhance prehistoric play and volcanic investigations.

Cutting the Grass

Cut out a piece of sod and place it on a piece of hard clear plastic. Leave pairs of scissors on top. The children will practice fine motor skills cutting the grass. Water daily and watch the grass grow on the underside. If you are lucky, there will be a few earthworms to watch.

A Pipe Dream

On a large piece of pegboard, clip clear pipes that have been connected in interesting twists. Have one end of the pipes go into a water table with one color of water; the other end goes into a second table with different colored water. Let the children problem solve, make decisions and work cooperatively in order to move the pipes to make the two colors of water meet at the center of the structure and combine.

Give them days to discover the properties of water and gravity. It will be a favorite in your classroom.

Bones, Bones, Bones

Ask parents and staff to save chicken and beef bones from dinner. Have them boil them for an hour and cool before sending them to class. Put the bones on a table with pictures of skeletons and watch the children make their own skeletons. Great Halloween fun!

Sail Away

Bring in scrap lumber and talk about how boats float and why they sink. Have children build their own boats, paint and give them names. Have a Sail Away day. If you have access to a video camera, interview the captains and tape the event. Good to show on parents' night. Or take snapshots for each child to take home.

Watching Peanuts Grow

Have each child soak peanuts for a few days in water. Put them on a piece of clear plastic paper and stick them to the side of a clear glass. Watch the embryo grow. The first to grow is the root, then side roots form and finally the young stem and leaves come out from between the seed leaves. What fun that goes on and on.

Gelatin Bubbles

Mix one litre of water, eight tablespoons gelatin, two tablespoons glycerine (from a drug store) and one tablespoon liquid detergent. Dissolve gelatin in very hot water. Gently stir in glycerine and liquid detergent. Pour a small amount in tart tins or styrofoam cups. Create sculptures with the bubbles.

Bubble Prints

Add food coloring to bubble solution. Blow through a straw into the solution in the cup. Fill the cup with bubbles. Put white paper on top and make prints of the bubbles.

Painting with Bubbles

Mix bubble liquid of liquid detergent, water and add tempera paint. Add quarter cup of glycerine if available. Give each child a container with liquid and a straw. When bubble is at end of straw, paint with it on construction paper. Thread string to various lengths of straws to make new shapes to dip in liquid. Make square and triangle shaped bubbles. Also cut out the centers of plastic lids for bubble blowers.

Freezing Bubbles

If you live in a cold climate, take the bubble mixture outside on a day when the temperature is below freezing. Blow bubbles and watch ice crystals form.

What's Inside?

Use any appliance or machine that can be taken apart, such as a phonograph, telephone, typewriter, radio or even a car engine. Put out many tools including screwdrivers, wrenches, hammers and pliers. Keep paper bags on the table in case the special nut or bolt removed becomes a treasure to take home.

Fun with Wire

Set up a center with coils of colored wire. Friends at the telephone company are a good resource. If children cannot cut wire, cut in many different lengths. Add pieces of corkboard or styrofoam to the learning center. Add clay, playdough, lengths of straws, scraps of paper, pipe cleaners and scissors to cut wire. The sculptures will be magnificent.

New Tools for Woodworking

Use pumpkins, styrofoam or scrap wood--pine is easy for children to use. Tools to have available are: planes, drag planes, sand paper, C clamps, hack saws, hand drills, T squares, straight edges, vice, carving chisel, chisel, size 8D nails, screwdrivers, large screws and hammers. Have a variety of nontoxic paint and paintbrushes available. Always have an adult at the workbench and have children use goggles. Put a rubber band on the back of the goggles to keep them secure.

Springs and Coils

Set up a center with springs and coils, big and small. They can be purchased at reasonable cost from scientific catalogs or call local manufacturing firms. Add magnets, rubber bands, popsicle sticks, string and wire and watch the fun.

Pull a Pulley

Attach a drapery rod with a pulley on it securely to the wall at the child's level. Attach a basket to the rod using colorful yarn. Have a variety of materials for children to pull and weigh.

Magnet Hunt

Fill the sand table with sawdust (lumber yards will usually donate it). Put a drop cloth under the table for clean up. Bury jar lids, rubber bands, gum wrappers, blocks, rocks, candles, pins, paper clips, brads, staples, costume jewelry, thumb tacks, screws, nails, thimbles, kitchen utensils and an old wristwatch. Have magnets available for children to go on a hunt to see what they can find. (Remove your watches while at this center. Magnetism can destroy them.)

Balance in the World

Have these articles available to use on a balance: Buttons, stones, marbles, nuts, bolts, blocks, beads, noodles, grapes, oranges, lemons, marshmallows and crackers. Children could classify articles according to weight--how many marshmallows are needed to balance one block?

Hanging in the Balance

Have coat hangers and tape available for the children. Have them go on a safari hunt around the classroom to "find" things to tape on the hanger. Do the items all balance on the hanger? Why? Why not?

Molecule Models

Use several dozen plastic practice golf balls; wrap medical tape one and a quarter times around each ball. Glue a looped piece of velcro and fuzzy pieces of velcro (half inch squares) on opposite sides of each ball, on top of the tape with Goop adhesive. Add pieces of vinyl cord, pipe cleaners, colored wire to the table to put molecules together.

Racing Balloon Boats

You need various sizes and shapes of balloons and half gallon milk cartons. Play with blown up balloons first. Toss round ones in air. Watch them float down. Blow up long balloons and point upward and release air. As air shoots out one way, the balloon shoots off in the opposite direction. Talk about the jet propulsion of the balloon.

Cut the milk carton in half and put a hole close to the bottom of the carton in the back. Pull the neck of the balloon through the hole and blow it up. Float the boat in the water table and let go of the balloon. Watch the propulsion. Have a race with many boats.

Rolling Circles

Give each child a bicycle tire to toss, roll, catch and jump through. Add music and scarves and join the fun. Good for learning language development and discussing the properties of circles.

Water Ideas

Indian Salt Clay- is made with one cup flour and one cup salt. Add a little cool WATER and mix. If too sticky add more flour, if too dry add more WATER.

Witches Magic Potion- Pretend to be a witch. Sprinkle pepper in a bowl of WATER and watch it float. Put a drop of soap in the WATER. It should float away, why? The oil in the soap causes the pepper to move.

Ghoul Stew- Place bowls of cooked macaroni and dry macaroni beside containers. Experiment with different textures of macaroni. What happens to the macaroni when it is added to WATER?

Glass + WATER = Music- Fill several glasses with different levels of WATER. Tap the glasses with a spoon and listen to the variation in tones. The glass with the smallest amount of WATER will have the highest pitch.

Cornstarch and WATER- Add a few drops of WATER at a time to cornstarch until you have dough. Let the mixture seep through your fingers. Let it dry out. It becomes chalky again!

Celery and colored WATER- Place a stalk of celery into red or blue colored WATER. Put the one end of celery in the WATER. It shows red streaks. The celery is drinking the colored WATER.

Indian corn and WATER- Put Indian corn into a shallow dish or ice cube tray. Add approximately one inch of WATER. Change the WATER every day. Watch what grows.

Evaporation- Have the children wet a handkerchief and place over a radiator or heat duct. Place the same amount of WATER into identical clear plastic glasses. Mark the WATER level on the outside with a rubber band or marker. Cover one of the glasses and record the changes every day.

More Evaporation- In two flat dishes put a mixture of salt and WATER and just WATER. Place near the heat duct. After the evaporation discuss what is on each plate. Taste the salt leftovers.

Paint with WATER- Use large paint brushes and buckets of water. Go outside and paint the buildings and sidewalks. Talk about how the water disappears and why.

Fingerpaint with soap and WATER- Mix half cup WATER and half cup of Ivory Flakes with a mixer. Add food coloring and whip until thick. Add liquid starch and mix until stiff.

Air Pressure- Fill a glass jar with colored WATER. Punch two holes in the lid and screw it on tightly. Invert. Notice how WATER comes from one hole. Put your finger over the one hole. What happens?

Melting Ideas- Sprinkle sugar, sand and salt into separate glasses of WATER. Which one melts? Bring in snow on a cold wintry day and watch how it melts into WATER and dirt. Catch snowflakes on black construction paper and watch them turn to water.

chapter four

'To cease to think creatively is but little different from ceasing to live.'
Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

MORE FUN ACTIVITIES

Have your Lost Your Marbles?

Marbles are fun! Here are some great ideas to extend learning in your classroom.

Build a Ramp- with blocks and a board. Prop a clear vinyl tube, several feet long to use with marbles. Cardboard tubes can also be used, but the children can't see the traveling marbles. Have races with golf balls or any item. Keep changing the incline of the ramp. What happens? Cooperative play is wonderful during this activity.

Magnetic Marbles- Put magnetic marbles on a cookie sheet. Make roadways with tape on the sheet and have lots of magnets for children to use to move the marbles along the roads.

Cooperative Marbles- Line a long water pan for wallpaper with paper. Drop paint covered marbles into it. Have two children cooperatively paint with the marbles by moving the pan.

Real Marble- Studying glass marbles is a natural lead into studying rocks. Set pieces of natural or "real" marble out with magnifying glasses. Add glass marbles and other rocks. The children will begin to classify the items.

Flashlight Fun

You need flashlights, colored plastic sheets (the kind used with overhead projectors), colored cellophane, white poster board, red, yellow, blue construction paper, crystals on a string or other objects children can shine light through, such as a colander and dry and wet paper towels. Make a spooky corner where it is dark and leave all the props. OOOOHHHHH watch the learning going on!

Extensions for Flashlight Fun

Add toys that glitter, pinwheels and fluorescent gloves. Play happy music.

New Uses for an Old Blanket

Old blankets are treasures! Add sleeping bags, dishes, camping equipment and blocks for a fire. Keep the tent up for a long time. It will be very popular every fall when children have camped over the summer.

Car Wash- Hang a blanket over a clothesline with a sign. Add stop and go signs and mops. Watch the fun.

Stage Curtain- Hang a permanent curtain in the socio-dramatic area on a traverse curtain rod. Securely attached to the wall. The play productions will be better than Broadway and the fascination with opening and closing the curtain never ends!

Tree Play

You will need a large tree branch, small bucket and styrofoam. Securely attach the tree at the child's hand level. Add small toy animals, cotton swabs, clothespins, wood, string, small toy birds, dry flowers, ribbons, magnifying glasses, small pine cones, books on trees, airplanes and tree house materials. Depending on the time of year, you can tie on valentines, shamrocks, turkeys and pumpkins.

Themes for Fantasy Play

Need a new idea for a theme with props to encourage fantasy play. Check this list for ones you have never tried. Develop prop boxes and label each one. Store in a place children can choose their own theme.

Bakery	Shoe Store	Zoo
Fire Station	Police Dept.	The Beach
Grocery Store	Camera Shop	Gas Station
Beauty/Barber Shop	Milk Carriers	Birthday Party
Post Office	Book Store	School
Jewelry Store	Train Station	Wild West
Hospital	Airport	Veterinarian
Boat/Fishing	Castle	Secretary
Picnic	Farm	Office
Astronaut	Castle	Parlor
Pet Show/Circus	Campsite	Under Water
Log Cabin	Science Lab	Pizza Parlor
Pet Shop	Cider Mill	Bear Cave
Toy Shop	Ice Cream	Subway
Department Store	Dinosauer Museum	Elevator

Inventors

Develop a special place in the room with many kinds of hats. Every inventor needs a hat to think! When you ask children to think about something, tell them to have a "Brainstorm." This is like rain that comes out of a cloud in a rainstorm. Your ideas storm out of your head in a brainstorm.

Spooky Spider

Use these materials to make spooky spiders..paper plates, styrofoam balls, paper bags, tongue depressors, pipe cleaners, black construction paper, straws, cotton balls, pompons, buttons, stickers, yarn and string. Make spider hats out of the paper plates. WOO!

Make a Matching Web

Put school glue on wax paper to make a web design. Wait for it to dry and peel off the paper. Hang it up in the window with spooky spider.

Marshmallow Magic

Use miniature and jumbo marshmallows, white and pastel colored ones. Make sure you have many extras as the children love to eat while thinking. Add a wide variety of straws, such as cocktail straws and flexible ones. Watch the structures begin!

Color Mixing

Use small jars filled with water; add different colors of food coloring--or mix colors. Put white paper on table and tape wax paper on top. Have children experiment picking up the colored water with eye droppers and dropping on wax paper and on soap dishes covered with small suction cups. Reverse the process of picking up droplets on the wax paper and putting back in the jars. When the children are done playing, place a single sheet of white paper towel over the droplets to watch absorption.

Paper Play

Have a wide assortment of papers including white and colored tissue (Madras is very popular), waxed, paper towels, florist, crepe, cellophane in various colors, cardboard tubes, foil and Easter grass. Add magnifying glasses, eye droppers, food coloring, water and sit back and watch.

Candle Painting

You need white candles, paper, water colors and brushes. Press down hard to draw with a white candle on white paper. Brush dark water colors over the picture. Watch the paper absorb the color and the magic drawing appear. Use crayons with younger children, they become frustrated when they cannot "see" what they are drawing and lose interest.

Chalk Drawing

Use multi colored chalk, drawing paper, sponges and water in a spray bottle. Draw a picture on a dampened drawing paper. The chalk on wet paper creates a velvet-like painting. Wrap three or four colors of chalk together with masking tape. Paint with the bunch all at once for a new effect.

Toddler Activity Center

Build a toddler activity center on a four foot smooth piece of plywood. Add door stopper springs, two bar door latches, a mounting plate, one and a half inch diameter; one section plastic plumbing pipe, one and a half inch diameter; a closet light, a cow bell, bike bell, door bell, buzzer, trunk latch, cupboard latch, steering wheel and metal door handle.

Pudding Painting

Have children make instant vanilla pudding together. Scoop a half cup of pudding into individual gallon size zip lock bags and add a few drops of food coloring. Push out all the air and seal. Children can do magic painting with pudding bags.

Mini Puppet Theatre

Use a sturdy cardboard box lid, approximately 16"x12". Cut a hole in the top wide enough for stick puppets to come through and glue fabric ruffle around bottom of box. Attach a strap to hang around a child's neck to carry the theatre. Make puppets out of fabric and paper on popsicle sticks. Add goggle plastic eyes for fun.

Pick It Up

Use these two ideas to encourage fine motor development. Have a collection of plastic bottles. Have a pair of pliers handy to practice twisting the caps off and on.

Put a number of small objects, such as checkers, bottle tops and jacks in a bowl. Place another bowl a short distance away. Give the children a pair of tweezers or tongs and have them take turns lifting and transporting the objects from one bowl to another.

Ideas for Puppet Making

In your puppet center have socks, boxes, tubes, bags, fast food containers for French fries and hamburgers, empty boxes, milk cartons, paper plates, clothes pins, gloves, mittens, slippers, shoes, envelopes and of course you can paint your hands for the puppet base.

Add torn paper, instead of cut--it gives a better effect, curl paper for hair and provide the usual materials, plus handkerchiefs, feathers, old jewelry and safety pins. The pins allow children to change the parts on the puppets. After they have made a wide range of parts, add velcro to the puppet and parts for a permanent place in the hearts of the children.

Tracks

Use three shallow large containers filled with sand, clay and potting soil. Have the children make tracks in dry soil and then add water. Make tracks with bare feet and shoes. Make plaster molds of foot tracks.

Dip the wheels of trucks and cars in tempera paint and make different tracks on paper. Look for tracks outside. Make different animal tracks.

Flour Paint

Fill squeeze plastic bottles with a mixture of flour and water and add a few drops of food coloring. It should be the consistency of catsup. Paint away.

Colored Pasta

Color pasta by putting two cups of uncooked pasta noodles in a large plastic bag. Add food coloring and a teaspoon of rubbing alcohol. Pasta can be used for a wide range of art activities.

Bag Sculptures

Pour quick setting plaster into a zip lock bag for each child. Add sufficient water to form soft dough. The child can squeeze the bag until it begins to set. Dry tempera can be added to the plaster mixture or paint the sculptures when they dry.

AAARRRGGHH! Slime

Add white glue (not school glue) and liquid starch in equal amounts and food coloring in separate margarine tubs. Mix with your hands--the more you squeeze, the better the slime is. Put mixture on end of straw and blow bubbles. Store in a covered container.

Sawdust Modeling

Mix one cup dry wheat paste, two cups of water and four cups of sawdust. Mix thoroughly and use like clay. The objects of art dry in two to three days and can be painted.

Or try this recipe for a smaller amount. Mix two cups each of water and sawdust, one cup plaster of Paris and half cup of dry wheat paste. It also takes a few days to dry before painting.

Monster Masks

Have the child make a mask out of clay that looks like the monsters in their closet at bedtime. Paint when dry. You will be scared too when you see what is in children's bedrooms at night!

Spectacular Spaghetti

Cook different shapes of spaghetti, add a few drops of oil so it doesn't stick together. Drain well and cool. Pour white glue in pie dish, add food coloring if desired. Stir to get a swirling effect and dip pieces of spaghetti in glue and paste on styrofoam plates. Let dry over night. When dry, peel spaghetti off and tie pieces of yarn to them. Hang near a window to get a stained glass effect.

Add to Art Table

Some items to add to the art table are powdered paint and cotton balls, coffee grounds, bird seed and corn meal for collages, sift flour with sifter, dye sand with dry powdered paint.

Tactile Experiences

Walk in styrofoam packing pieces for a fun tactile experience. Other variations are fill pans with wet sponges or contact paper and sand paper.

More Painting

Have children paint tissue paper with liquid starch. Also paint toast with food coloring mixed with juice.

Paint Smocks

Cut holes for arms and head in tall plastic kitchen bags for a great inexpensive paint smock.

Outside Painting

Use the following materials to have a painting party outside: Easels, plastic sheeting, tables, paint trays, long sheets of white paper, finger paint, buckets with water for washing and paper towels. These are great to paint with--fly swatters, sponges, scrubbers, cleaning brushes, toothbrushes, toilet bowl brush, spatula, soup ladle, pancake turner and large slotted spoon. Cheap shampoo squirted on the paint stains will take them out in the wash.

Variations for Easel Painting

Use three shades of one colored paint by adding black or white paint.

Tie two paint brushes to a branch with two prongs. Good for problem solving and decision making.

Use pine sprigs and pine cones to paint with instead of brushes. Also use sponges cut into shapes and change the shapes and colors of the paper.

Put colored tissue paper on easel. Paint with water. Peel off the paper and see the different colors left on the easel.

Peanut Butter Play Dough

Mix half cup each of peanut butter and honey and one cup powdered milk. Knead until smooth. Double the recipe--children love to eat it while they play.

Gingerbread Man

Read the story the Gingerbread Man as the children play with peanut butter play dough. Add raisins, cherries and red licorice for decorations.

Moving with Paint

Cut a piece of paper to fit a Lazy Susan. Spin around and have fun painting the paper with different colors of tempera paint. A good cooperative process that develops hand/eye coordination.

Plexiglass Painting

Put a large piece of plexiglass on a wooden stand so children can paint on both sides at the same time. If there is no stand, put it between two sawhorses and one child can paint on the top and the other underneath. What conversation goes on.

Shadow Play

Hang a white sheet across a rope in the play area. Set up a projector and add flashlights so it shines directly on one side of the sheet. The larger the distance between the projector and sheet, the bigger the area of light. Children can make shadows on one side of the sheet while the audience can watch on the other.

Pinwheels

Cut diagonal slits at an angle at each corner of a large square. Fold the inside corners down to the center. Anchor with a straight pin and attach to a pencil or straw.

Collage

Have you thought of adding these collage materials to the table? Try fabric, feathers, bird seed, sand, rice, oatmeal, sugar, beads, glitter, salt, alphabet macaroni, paper clips and rubber bands.

Whoosh! Watch the Scarves

Provide scarves of all shapes and colors--the gaudier, the better! Turn on the music, add musical instruments and dance away the morning.

Colored Popcorn

Put white popcorn kernels in bowl and squeeze in food coloring. Add cover and shake to some music. When coloring is done, pop corn in air popper. Yummy!

Collage on a Pumpkin

Provide ribbon, lace, trims, beads with large holes, styrofoam, muffin papers, egg cups from egg cartons, nylon net and pipecleaners for trim on the pumpkin. Children decorate the pumpkin using hammer and nails. Can be an individual process or cooperative one.

Crumpled Bag Play

Crumple brown paper bags until they resemble leather or other textures. When they straighten them out paint designs on them with finger paints or make costumes for Wild West corner.

The children could also tape many crumpled bags and paint a mural together.

Watch Me!

Put finger paints near mirrors in your classroom. Have the children paint the reflections of their faces on the mirror.

Messy Marshmallows

Use scissors with large and small colored marshmallows that have been frozen and defrosted. Add straws, toothpicks, pipe cleaners for more fun with architecture.

Fun with Feet

Have the child sit in a chair while they paint with their toes in a shallow tray. Have a "feely" box with items to be identified by putting your foot in the box and guessing. Some good items are cooked and raw spaghetti, pine cones, stones and sand.

Edible Painting

Edible painting materials to use are yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, cheese spreads, mashed potatoes, pumpkin, junior baby foods, cooked noodles, sauerkraut, honey and mashed bananas, oatmeal, grits, cream of wheat, cookie dough and canned biscuits.

Icicle Painting

Freeze paper cups (about 5 ounce size) with colored water. Insert a popsicle stick. Children sprinkle paint on the icicle and paint with it on shiny fingerpainting paper. Lay flat to dry--do not hang.

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